TRANSCRIPT—BECKY RAMSEY

Interviewee: Becky Ramsey

Interviewer: Ruth Ehrlich and Sandra Jackson

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RE: Okay. Today is August the 27th. This is Sandra Jackson, Ruth Ehrlich, and we're here at the Fairview Library to interview Becky Ramsey for the Fairview History project. Becky has just been chomping at the bit to get started, so we had to step on her toes to get her slowed down here. Becky, as we get started, let us get some demographic information on you and then we'll just let you have the floor, okay? When were you born? Tell us if you would.

BR: January the 15th, 1943. I was my parents' first hospital baby. I was born the day before my mother and daddy's anniversary, so it was good that I wasn't the first child.

RE: Where were you born?

BR: Morristown, Tennessee.

RE: In the hospital?

BR: The hospital.

RE: At Morristown-Hamblen?

BR: Uh-huh. It was not Hamblen then. It was just Morristown Hospital, and I came home in an ambulance the same day I was born.

RE: How did you end up coming home in an ambulance?

BR: I guess because we didn't stay at the hospital any longer than we had to.

RE: That's interesting that you were sent home in an ambulance the same day you were born.

BR: My grandmother fights with rheumatoid arthritis, so maybe my mama thought she needed to come home to deal with two older children, plus my grandmother, plus help my father on the farm.

RE: Wow. Now who are you married to?

BR: Roy Ramsey.

RE: What was your maiden name?

BR: Litz. L-I-T-Z.

RE: Okay, Tell us about your children.

BR: Well, I have two children, and my husband's birthday is this Friday. I mean, this Wednesday, the 29th. My oldest child is 50, and his birthday was August the 7th. My younger child's birthday is... The young one, his birthday was last Wednesday, the 22nd.

You add 22 and seven together and you get 29, so you know that I'm low on the totem pole.

RE: So the child that's born 8/7, who is that?

BR: Nathan. He's my oldest one. He's 50.

RE: What year was he born?

BR: 1968.

RE: Okay, Nathan. And your other one is?

BR: We call him Bart, B-A-R-T, but his name is Franklin Bartlett.

RE: What was his year of birth?

BR: 1974.

SJ: I could have told you that one.

BR: [inaudible 00:02:39].

RE: Tell us about your education.

BR: Well, you won't believe it, but I went to school in Tennessee where they teach you how to read and write and I graduated. I went to Manley Elementary School. I didn't plan to get in all this. I could be here all day telling about all this stuff. My mother was real active in PTA and in the community, and my brother said he was the only boy in his eighth grade class that didn't get a spanking. He thought the principal was scared of my mother.

RE: Now, is Manley in Morristown?

BR: Yeah, it's right on Andrew Johnson Highway.

RE: Okay.

BR: I went to Manley Elementary through the eighth grade, and then I went to Morristown High School and graduated in 1960. And then I went to University of Tennessee and got a BS degree in home economics. And then I went to... You probably know where that is, Campbell County, Tennessee, [inaudible 00:03:42] and lived there three years as assistant home demonstration agent, and then Roy swept me off my feet and I got married.

RE: And the rest is history, huh?

BR: Yeah.

RE: So, you only worked those three years.

BR: Right. Well, I've done a little substitute teaching. I've worked as a guidance counselor for about two or three months. I vaccinated baby chickens over at Smith Farms when I was pregnant with Bart, so whatever.

RE: I love it. Well, that gets us started. Tell us how you ended up coming to Fairview.

BR: Well, my in-laws were from this area, and they had a farm in Fletcher. They decided they wanted to have a bigger dairy, so they sold their farm in Fletcher on Jackson Road in 1959 and moved to Tennessee.

Then Roy and I got married in 1967. They never liked Tennessee like North Carolina, and they wanted to come back to North Carolina. Roy got a job teaching school down in Yadkin County at Starmount High School. We left the farm and went to Yadkin County where we lived for two years and Roy taught school.

And then in 1968, his parents bought this farm on Wilson Road where they lived. About three years later, we came up and Roy had a job at Federal Land Bank, and then he worked on the farm on the weekends and after work and all that.

RE: How big is the farm?

BR: Well, they had about a hundred acres, I think.

RE: What kind of farming did they do?

BR: Oh, they're very focused. Dairy, milk cows. That's all they ever did. But when I grew up, we had peacocks, hogs, sheep, cows, horses, goats, everything.

RE: So, you grew up farming and on a farm.

BR: Yes. But our farm was almost in town. You could be downtown in five minutes, and here it takes you forever to get to town. Not that long, but when you're used to five minutes and then it's 20 minutes or something, it's a different ball game.

RE: When did you all come to the farm here? When was that again?

BR: 1971.

RE: Did you work the dairy farm?

BR: Well, I didn't do too much. I just... Roy had a real estate office for a while and I worked in his real estate office. We were the only real estate office in town. We opened it when Bart was six weeks old, and we had a six-week-old baby and it was an interesting life.

RE: You said that the real estate office was in town. Where is in town?

BR: On, Hendersonville Road.

RE: Okay.

BR: It was close to Ballards. I don't know if you know where Ballards was. It was an appliance store and all that on Hendersonville Road, and it was close to there where we had a real estate office. It was interesting.

RE: Before we turned this recording on, I jotted down some notes. You talked about T.C. Roberson being upper crust and Reynolds High School being the redneck school. Talk to us about that a little bit.

BR: Well, Sandra knows it's not a figment of my imagination because she was a participant at Reynolds, so she knows all that. But it's just people get these ideas in their mind. It's just like... I don't know. It's just the way things are sometimes.

It's not necessarily that it’s true, but somebody thinks something. It's like wearing designer clothes, or I shouldn't get on this organic food. It's really not that much better in my mind. I don't care if you buy your shoes secondhand or you get them at exclusive place. We're all walking on the same road, so it doesn't matter.

SJ: We were called the Farview Hicks out here.

RE: Were you really, the Farview Hicks?

SJ: Mm-hmm.

BR: Well...

RE: Why do you think that was?

SJ: They just did. What's funny is some of the kids in my class who did it the most turned out living down here.

RE: Were the kids from around here? I mean like-

SJ: The Oakley, Haw Creek, Bell and Fairview all went to Reynolds. The other three schools called us the Farview Hicks out here. Of course, I would've been Oakley if I had stayed here, but it was still called Farview Hicks.

RE: Is it still called that?

SJ: No.

BR: No. I think--

SJ: People are all out here now.

BR: I think we're sort of getting the upper crust now.

SJ: Yeah.

RE: You think so?

BR: Yeah, high and mighty, don't you think?

SJ: Oh, yeah. Aretha Franklin or whoever it was, wasn't it? Well, who was it we have--Gladys Knight.

BR: Oh, Gladys Knight lives here. Yeah, a lot of people live here that's nice. Even the people that's not famous are nice. It's wonderful. Wilson Road is the very best road. This is one thing I thought that I want make sure to mention. Wilson Road is the very best road I have ever lived on in all my life because everybody there--not that I didn't have good neighbors at other places, but everybody there was of one accord and you didn't have to ask them for help if they thought they could help you with something. If you help them, they might bring you a sack of potatoes, I don't know what, but whatever. Everybody appreciated everybody. It was just like heaven on earth, and you know everybody used to live on Wilson Road. A lot of those people are dead now, but, oh, it's just salt of the earth people on Wilson Road.

RE: I don't know where Wilson Road is.

BR: It's where you smell manure and you go...

(Laughter)

SJ: We passed it going to see John and Annie.

RE: Okay, so go 'til you smell manure, then hang a left.

SJ: Yeah. Really and truly, you hang a left.

BR: But you might come to my house and we'd still continue the smell, but anyway. Somebody came to see me one time and they said, "Becky, your house smells like the barn," and I said, "No wonder."

RE: Why did it smell like the barn?

BR: Well, where you think they put their barn clothes and everything? Sometimes they put them outside, but sometimes they bring them inside.

RE: But this must have been a real close friend who's telling you your house smelled like a barn, huh?

BR: Well, I don't know. It's okay. It doesn't matter. Most stuff you say to me just rolls off like a... (Laughter)

RE: So, you've been in Fairview since the early '70s.

BR: Right.

RE: What kind of changes have you seen in Fairview?

BR: Well, the road of course is different. People generally are different because people generally used to be more conservative, period, than they are today. You didn't have the drug crisis. You didn't have as many single parents. You didn't have as many people showing a lack of respect. Just a lot of general, very strong foundationally earlier. I'm not saying that there's not a few who screws around because they are everywhere. But it was basically as good as you could have anywhere here. It really was.

It's still okay. It's still not bad. But we are not immune to all of these problems that everybody else is having. It's not only in Fairview. It's all over the country. I mean, I'm not complaining about Fairview or anything, you know.

RE: As you look at Fairview and changes, what do you see changing about Fairview that may be troubling, or what do you anticipate changing about Fairview that might be troubling?

BR: As far as I'm concerned, it's not that much except the drugs and all that stuff. It's not really that much stuff that bothers me. I mean there's not as many people who go to church. Whether you believe in God or not, that's your problem or your situation, but really God is the foundation of everything, whether you want to admit it or recognize it or not. And so, you can take the Lord's name in vain. You can go out and kill your neighbor. You can do whatever you want to do, but just because you do it, doesn't mean it's right.

RE: Do you have a church affiliation?

BR: Yes, I go to an independent Baptist church now, but I've always been a Baptist.

RE: What church do you go to?

BR: Pleasant Grove, which is on the corner of Garren Creek and Hollywood Road.

RE: That may be where I saw you. I used to go to Pleasant Grove.

BR: You never told us your last name. I remember you were real attractive and you never told your name was Ruth. You know what? I knew I'd seen you. See? It's either the grocery store or church. I tell people. I used to have two triangles and now I just have one

triangle because CVS doesn't take our Blue Cross anymore and we go to Walgreens, and that's taking me off of my stability. Basically, all I want is the bank, the post office, and Food lion, my triangle.

RE: You don't have to go much beyond that triangle, huh?

BR: Right.

RE: How long have you gone to Pleasant Grove?

BR: Well, I used to go to Fairview Baptist, and I'd say it's about 1984. I probably don't need to record this, but Pleasant Grove is not perfect. Fairview Baptist wasn't perfect, but if you find the perfect church, when I get there, it's not perfect. The church is composed of people with their positives and negatives. If we're looking for utopia, it's not around.

RE: Now, Fairview Baptist, is that the church that's the white church, that's over on the left?

BR: On Church Road. Do you know where Church Road is?

RE: I don't know. I used to drive by. I went by a little church one time. It looked like it's really old Fairview church.

SJ: It's white blocks. That's where we met each other.

RE: Oh, really? And I think I went by there and thought about going in and it didn't look like it was inhabited and I didn't go back. And then I drove by there one day after church at Pleasant Grove and there was a congregation coming out.

SJ: That's probably it if she came right.

BR: Yeah, it's on Church Road if you know where Church Road is.

RE: Don't know for sure.

BR: Do you know where Village Road is?

RE: No. Remember I'm new here.

BR: How did you get to Pleasant Grove?

How did you get to the library? (Laughter)

RE: She's a feisty one, isn't she?

RE: Sometimes I drove to go toward the creamery and went up across the hill and around about that way. And sometimes--

BR: That's Noble Road. That's Noble Road--

RE: Sometimes I'll go down to Fairview Kennel and turn left and go back that way too.

SJ: Well, it would've been up by the--

BR: Noble.

SJ: Creamery and the Noble Road. It was Noble Road then Church Road and then Garren Creek.

RE: Okay, good.

BR: Well, I'm glad that we know.

RE: Now, we know. (Laughs) Okay, so you left Fairview Baptist to go to Pleasant Grove?

BR: I thought I was going to go to town, but, because I was raised in First Baptist Church in Morristown--not that it was a big thing, but I thought I can't go to Pleasant Grove because... This is stupid now. But I thought I can't go to Pleasant Grove ‘cause they don't have printed bulletins. They don't have church robes, choir robes.

But, anyway, because I was raised with printed bulletins and choir robes and all that, but I found out as you mature that all that's not important. Anyway, I thought we would really go to town. But we have a farm and we do well to make it to church close by. The distance to go, we don't really have time to drive to town. Sometimes right now the boys don't even have time to get to Pleasant Grove because there's a lot of stuff at certain times goes on. It's like I told the preacher one Sunday: It seems like the devil works overtime at our house on Sunday morning.

RE: Are you all still farming that property?

BR: Yes.

RE: What are you doing on the farm? Is it still dairy, or what are you doing?

BR: Yes, and dairy is really bad right now. Some farmers have committed suicide.

RE: Really?

BR: Yeah.

RE: So, this is dairy being milk?

BR: Yes.

RE: Do you do cheese or anything else

BR: No, we don't do that. We thought about doing that, but one, it cost a lot of money to get into all that. And so, I don't know what the long story is going be, but--

SJ: They sell to Ingles.

BR: Yeah, we got even assigned--

SJ: It's on Facebook.

BR: We got even assigned, Bart and Nathan, Bart's meeting with Leah McGrath today and they [inaudible 00:17:17] something about showing them something about the dairy today.

RE: How many cows do you have?

BR: I think we're milking about 170.

RE: Wow.

BR: But that's not much. See, this is one thing that's wrong with the milk business. Some dairies have 10,000 cows. I don't know. I don't care if you're on the computer. I don't see how you keep up with 10,000 cows.

SJ: It's more than just two boys doing it.

RE: That's what I'm saying. How many people do you guys employ?

BR: Oh, we have six all the time right now besides us and the family. And then at certain times, we hire Tony Nesbitt to chop our silage and stuff because that equipment costs so much. Plus, he can come in there and do it in three or four days and it'd take us longer than that to get it done.

RE: So, the family working the farm is you and your husband and your two boys?

BR: Nathan has a job besides that. He has workforce development and stuff, but he works on the farm on Saturday and Sunday.

RE: Wow.

BR: And it's not like... They start milking at 1:00 in the morning and at night if they don't finish. Of course, they have some vacant time in between. But, at night, Bart hardly ever gets home before 7:30 and sometimes, if he has a cow having a calf or something, he might not get home until 9:00 or 9:30.

RE: Wow. That's work, isn't it?

BR: It's a slave.

RE: Do you guys have any vegetable gardens or it's totally dairy?

BR: No, we go the farmer's market and buy our vegetables. I feed work hands every day.

RE: Do you?

BR: Whoever wants to come and eat.

RE: And you cook for how many maximum?

BR: Well, last week, one day I had eight. Today, counting Roy and Bart and I, we just had five today. It just all depends on how many is around or whatever.

RE: So, you cook lunch for them?

BR: Yes.

RE: Wow. Big meal?

BR: Well, I think today we had peach cobbler and... What is it? Five-bean, those dried beans that's a mixture with ham in them and macaroni salad and okra.

RE: And you feed them every day?

BR: One guy I feed every day. He's not married. He even comes and eats with us on Sunday.

RE: I need to get your address.

BR: Just see me at the grocery store.

RE: How do you know how much food to prepare?

BR: Well, I just fill up the pots and hope and pray I have enough left if somebody extra comes, and it always works out.

RE: That's amazing.

BR: It's just--you know, it's just life.

RE: So, you do this 365 days a year?

BR: Yeah. Except when I go to the doctor on my birthday. I always get my physical on my birthday, and then I go to Chick-fil-A and get Chick-fil-A sandwiches for everybody. That's my birthday present, Chick-fil-A sandwich. There's not really anything I really want, so I just get Chick-fil-A sandwich for everybody for my birthday and that's my present.

SJ: Get the cookies too. Those are good.

BR: Well, I usually have me some desserts someplace.

RE: Do you--

BR: Sometimes it's Little Debbie stuff.

RE: That's okay. That works. That works. So, you don't go out to eat?

BR: Very seldom.

RE: Wow.

BR: And if we go, it's usually the drive-through window and we bring it home like if we're going to be late, like I'm having shots in my eye. I have histoplasmosis and I've had 11 shots in my eye and once a month... It's not bad because they give you this other stuff. I don't know why I'm talking about all this rather than Fairview.

But anyway, and so I got shot in my eye and then we went to the farmer's market and got some vegetables and stuff. I mean like boxes full, bushels, and bring them home. And then we went to Harbor Inn and got everybody a fish dinner and brought home.

RE: How amazing. Tell us, you want to get back to Fairview, and you were telling us about this house that, your prop--your house now and what had been there. Talk to us about these photos a little bit.

BR: Well, Popsie Lynch gave me these pictures, and I always heard from Nanny Ashworth, a lady that lived in Fairview a long, long time ago. You remember her?

SJ: Oh, yeah.

BR: She told me there was a house that burned that was at the house where I lived and it had a big porch. I pictured a Southern mansion with a big porch and the columns in the front like you see in Charleston or something. And this was the house and this was the porch on the back. She said they slept out there on that porch sometime. This house caught on fire, and from the stories I've heard that Ms. Lynch, her name was Elmira Thoms Lynch, that she must had arthritis or something and they rolled her out on a bag of oats to get her out of the house when the house burned.

And then they rebuilt the house that I live in here. According to the county, it's 1913, so I don't know if that's right or not, but anyway. This was the first house, and I really think that we've still got that tree, but I might not. And we've got huge boxwoods, so I don't know if these are the original boxwoods or some were replanted when they built the house.

RE: If the house burned down completely, so you wouldn't think the boxwood would've survived, would you?

BR: Well, that's what I think, but I don't know. In front of this house is Drovers Road, our driveway is Drovers Road.

RE: Was this person related to you guys? Was Popsie Lynch?

BR: No.

RE: You all just happened to buy this property.

BR: Well, she lives across from us. This was her great-grandparents' home, and she lives across the Charlotte Highway from us.

RE: But your house is built on this property now?

BR: Yes, right here. This is my house and it's built right there.

RE: Right. So, you all bought this property from them at some point?

BR: We bought it from Theodore Freeman who had bought it from... I think his name was Bill Lynch and he didn't have any children. He was married and his wife's name was Julie. Ms. Brady told me all this. His wife's name was Julie and she wanted to move to town. She was originally from Biltmore and she would ride the bus every day to go to work. I don't know if she had a car or not, but she'd drive. There's a car here though on this picture. But anyway, I think she rode the bus to go to work at Biltmore Homespun, I believe is where she worked.

But we bought it from Theodore Freeman estate, but he had bought it from the Lynches. I was hoping that Bruce Whitaker'd be here today because Ms. Brady told me that her grandfather bought a whole lot of acreage. I don't know how much that went all the way

to Garren Creek, and they'd lived in Betty Cameron's house and she always called it the Thoms' House. Ms. Lynch was a Thoms. So, what I'm wondering is when Ms. Brady's grandfather came and bought part of this property, that if Ms. Lynch wanted to keep her part, didn't want to sell her part, and that all this other was all the... Now, this is just my imagination, and all this other, they sold at that auction, but I'd like to know if that was all original Thoms' land, which was Mrs. Lynch's maiden name.

RE: You mentioned this article is very interesting article, you said. Tell us about this article. That's so interesting. What is it? The name of the article and tell us about it.

BR: "Becoming Aunt Jane," and you have to read it to really understand it. This woman at the time was from Mitchell County and she was 94 and she had 290 descendants. I didn't read it at all yesterday again, but I'll tell you what I remember. She got married when she was real young to a man who was 20 years her senior. He was in the Civil War for the South, and he would send her some money home. She had some little babies when he went off to war. He would send her some money home, and she would bury it or hide it somewhere, so that when he came home from the service, they'd have a little money saved where they could buy them a piece of ground. She said a piece of ground.

And then when he came home from the service, I don't know it probably tells in here how many children they had. Oh, it said eight children and 53 grandchildren and 169 great-grandchildren and 60 great-great-grandchildren. But anyway, when he came home, the South had lost the war. That money that she had saved and buried was not worth anything.

Also, while he was gone, you can imagine how she'd do with cooking and no electricity and all of that and carrying water and having these children. And I don't know if they went to school or not or what, but anyway. She said when she got ‘em to bed, she'd go hoe the corn by the moonlight.

RE: Wow.

BR: I said, when I, my husband's brother-in-law sent me this article and it was a reprint from the Citizen-Times. When I got it, I sent it to the Citizen-Times hoping that they would reprint it in the paper. But as far as I know, they never did.

RE: Was Aunt Jane related to you guys?

BR: I don't know anything about her. But I just think this is the one of the most interesting stories I've ever read in my life.

RE: Tell us about these others. We've got "Becoming"... This one. What is this one?

BR: Well, this is my uncle, and this is not related to Fairview, but my father was one of 12 children. My father told me, the first time I ever heard of this neck of the woods was when... My father was born in 1904, and he was almost 40 years old when I was born. He said that he met this young man when he was a little boy. I'm going to say it's 1910, I don't know when. He said, "Where are you from?" And he said, "Indianapolis, Indiana." And he said, "Where are you going?" He said, "Buncombe County, North Carolina," and he was driving pigs. Can you believe that somebody could drive pigs from Indianapolis, Indiana, to Buncombe County, North Carolina?

But anyway, back to this letter, in 1916, my uncle and his brother and a friend of theirs took nine horses. My grandfather was a livestock trader and stuff. I have here in this, it may be Sunburst, but now from other information I've learned, it may be Hazel Creek. My uncle and his brother and a friend went to take these horses over to, I think, Hazel Creek is in Graham County from Morristown. When they got to the French Broad River, there wasn't a bridge. They had to take a ferry with these horses across the French Broad River. It took them like a day to get to Gatlinburg. They were in this little log house and little log barn and all that. He tells about it and how they sat by the fireplace and how the lady would go and pour water on the fire to try to keep the fire from getting too hot and stuff.

And they had to cut trees out the way on this trail across the Smoky Mountains. When they got over to Hazel Creek or wherever and delivered their horses, which was Ritter Lumber Company, where they were going, and when they got over there, then they got on a train in Bryson City and rode the train to Asheville. And then the train went to Morristown and they met a man on the train that said he was going to see the President. Where is that in here? I didn't read it this time.

He was going to see the President and said he was going to take him an apple. "It was the day after the presidential election, and Woodrow Wilson defeated Charles Evans Hughes. At one stop, a man got on the train with the largest apple I have ever seen. It was about six inches in diameter, and he told us that he was sending it to President Wilson." I take it he was going to Washington to take this apple to the president. (Laughter)

RE: That's great. Did you say Roy was from around here?

BR: Well, he was born at Mission Hospital. He's from Fletcher. That's where they lived.

RE: Oh, okay. How did they end up here? They wanted the property, but did they have a particular interest in Western North Carolina?

BR: Well, I told you earlier that they were at Fletcher, and they went to Tennessee. Roy's mama told me shortly before she died that she knew why they went to Tennessee, so Roy could marry me. I thought that was sweet.

RE: Where did you meet Roy?

BR: Well, we knew each other a little bit because we went to college together, but he is really smart and I wasn't so smart. We went to college together and we barely knew each other, but I had a friend who prayed for me all the time and she still prays. Her prayers are still going down. The First Baptist Church in Asheville was founded in her great grandparent's home. She had never married.

She had met Roy's mother, and Roy's mother said, "Oh, I have this son who works all the time," sort of like a repeat now. "Works all the time and he doesn't get out much. I wish he..." And so she said, "Well, I know this nice girl," and so all that. Anyway, they have to sort of get together and so the rest is history, I guess.

RE: I love it. I love it. It's great. Okay, now you talk about your house that was built in. Did you say it was the 19-

BR: '13, according to the county.

RE: 1913. Has it undergone a lot of renovations?

BR: Well, when we bought the property, everybody wanted to burn it except me and the Lord. Woodpecker had eaten up one of the posts. It was bound to have been built well, but because it had had a lot of, what? Neglect, I guess. But anyway, so we remodeled it. Probably not the best in the world, but it's wonderful for us. We lived there 37 years since we remodeled it.

SJ: I haven't been there in years, but it was beautiful. When they finished.

BR: We got big rooms. That's nice. Every once in a while we think, "Well, maybe we ought to go and something." And I said, "I don't know if we'd like that or not because we got big rooms you put a lot of stuff in."

RE: Do you have any photos of your house when y'all first got it?

BR: Oh, I don't think so. Not really. But anyway, it probably looked about like that picture that of Popsie Lynch's.

SJ: I've got a picture of the house you lived in on Wilson Road.

BR: We moved from a two-bedroom stucco, one bath house to... We could have about five bedrooms, I guess. We've got three bathrooms, and we got two kitchens. Somebody said, "Did you have to buy any furniture stuff when you came over here?" I said, "Not really because I just took things out from under the beds." (Laughter)

RE: That's funny. That's funny. Okay, let's see what else we got here... Animals. Do you have pets?

BR: Well, we used to. We used to have the best dog that you've ever seen. He'd ride on top of the hay and all that, but he had a stroke, and we don't have any pets right now. We had a cat one time that we called Snacker because I thought our dog liked cats, and I thought that our dog would make a snack of our cat.

But anyway, our dog was wonderful that we had. Nathan took driver's ed at Reynolds, and I think everybody who took driver's ed had to take one of the driver's ed teacher's pets to pass the course. I don't know if that's true or not, but everybody in that class took a pet, and we took this pup. We didn't much like getting it at first, but it was the sweetest dog and it was so nice.

One time Roy lost his billfold. One day I looked down in the front yard and I saw somebody has dropped some paper in the front yard. I went to pick it up and it was some dollars, $1 bills, I think. I followed that little trail and that billfold was at our back. There's a little storage building behind our house, and that billfold was at that little storage building. That was the smartest dog.

RE: What kind of dog was that? Did he have a name?

BR: Our dog was Benson. He was... You might think I'm racist saying black, I shouldn't even say that on this tape, but black and white. He's black and white and he's a girl. We had her spayed. We watched that TV program Benson. Do you remember that? There was this wonderful TV program and we loved it. There was this Black man in that TV program, and his name was Benson and we named our dog after that man on that TV program.

RE: That's great. The people that you hire to help you on the farm, are these local folks?

BR: Well, some of them are Mexicans and some of them are local. One guy has worked for us for over 30 years. He's 67 now. We hope, if he decides to quit, that we can survive. He is so good and so nice, so wonderful.

RE: When you say some are Mexican, are they immigrants? Do they just come and do seasonal work or are they local?

BR: No, they're here all the time.

RE: They're here?

BR: Yeah. They've been here a long time.

RE: Very good, very good. So, they're not migrant workers, right? What's the most fun memory you have of being on the farm all these years?

BR: Well, to tell you the truth, it's like everything. There's bitter and sweet, but when you look at the big thing, big picture, I don't think anything could be any better. I think it's more sweet than... I can't think of one thing particular right now, but a lot of it, you know. I don't know. I don't know what's the highlight. When you think of your life, our life is like a piece of stitchery. We see the tangled threads on the back, and the Lord's making the picture on front, and he's working things out for our good and His glory, so you just have to believe it's all going to be good. He says, I'll work things out for your good, and that's what He does.

RE: I love it. I love it. We just get to see the pretty side of things, huh?

BR: Well, sometimes we think we're seeing the ugly side, but we find out it was pretty when we thought it was ugly.

RE: Yeah, I can see that.

BR: Let's see. I wrote down something here, and I don't know if you have this. 1916. Has anybody talked to you about the 1916 flood?

RE: No.

BR: Well, I don't know much about it, but my great uncle, my grandfather with his brother, was in South Carolina and he died. They had a hard time. He lived in Washington, D.C., and they had a hard time getting his body back to Washington because the flood had washed all the tracks away around here. There was a lot of damage. Ms. Frady or somebody told me that there was a lot of rocks come out that we see now came from the 1916 flood. It came down in Middle Fork down going toward Bat Cave and it washed a bunch of people away and drowned.

RE: How about that?

BR: 1916 flood. And then in 1973 we had a flood. Were you here in '73?

SJ: No, we were in New Orleans, but we came back home through it.

BR: And I know that we were down at... It was Memorial Day weekend, and it was on a Sunday night. We had gone to my parents' in Tennessee, and Roy's parents called us the next morning and said, "Don't hurry back coming home because there's a lot of roads washed out and all of this, and a lot of people's bridges, if they had a bridge to go to their

house, were washed out." There was a field of Mr. Ramsey's there on Wilson Road, and it looked like Arabian desert. It was covered with sand. It just looked like--

RE: Oh, really?

BR: Yeah.

SJ: People died in that one.

BR: Yeah, down on Mills Gap. I remember this woman saying that her husband and children died. I believe all of them didn't make it except her.

SJ: I don't remember. Like I said, we had been visiting New Orleans and came home through Atlanta and all that way and just... Oh, we saw everything.

BR: Well, anyway, I remember reading this in the paper where this woman said she was in this tree, clinging to a limb in this tree, and there was a snake on that same tree. She said that the snake didn't bother her, but her family had washed away and that's all.

RE: Wow. So, when rains come, when we have heavy rains around here, do you have some anxiety about whether there's going to be more flooding?

BR: No. Not really. I think because this year we had... Which we never had before, we had 24 inches of rain right after Mother's Day. We finished planting our corn the day before Mother's Day, and we had to replant 80 acres of corn this year. We never had to do that before.

RE: Wow. So, you grow corn for your cows?

BR: Right.

RE: Wow. And it's 80 acres of corn?

BR: We have about a hundred acres, I think, of corn, but 80 acres of it we had to replant because it had all that rain. We had the seed and the fertilizer and everything in the ground, but it rotted in the ground and couldn't germinate because it was so wet.

RE: Wow.

SJ: I remember reading that on Bart's page too.

RE: You just have to roll with the punches when you're out there farming and-

BR: Well, in life, you got to roll with the punches.

RE: That's true, yeah. Boy, what resilience.

BR: You go to town and you come home safe and sound. Some people go to town and they don't come home safe and sound. Either they had an accident or they had some kind of calamity, whatever. You got to be grateful for the moment. You have to get old afore you get grateful for the moment. (Laughter)

RE: True. Through the years, have y'all had family celebrations or any kind of community celebrations that have gone on that are annual or semi-annual?

BR: Well, not really. We just have our Mother's Day and this, that, and all that kind of stuff. But when you have something at our house, you don't celebrate too long because they have to get back to the barn.

RE: Well, what do you do for fun when you have some downtime? What do you do?

BR: What do you mean downtime?

RE: That's what I'm saying. Do you ever have downtime?

SJ: Well, she sneaks and reads Francine Rivers.

BR: Oh, those are the best books. Now, y'all listen to this on this tape if you've never read Francine Rivers. It's an addiction. I don't drink, and I don't smoke, and I try to refrain from Little Debbies, but Francine Rivers is wonderful.

RE: Is that what you do when you have some downtime? You snatch a few pages of Francine Rivers?

BR: Oh, if I can get five minutes of Francine Rivers.

SJ: What are you going to do when you read all her books?

BR: I don't know. I didn't even know she existed. My niece sent me a book Christmas, and I haven't read independently. I read the Bible and stuff, but I hadn't read independently in a long time because I really didn't think I had time. My friend had been really sick and I went to see her three afternoons a week and then she died. And so, my niece had sent me this Francine Rivers book last year for Christmas, and it was just laying gathering dust. I don't think I'd opened the first page. After Ms. Frady died, I thought, "I believe I'll read a little bit of this book." That was a mistake or a good thing one, I don't know which, but it's wonderful.

RE: Oh, gracious. Do you have time to be involved in any community services? Sandra talked the other day and Diana talked about the Welcome Table.

BR: Well, I don't do that. People talk to me about that. But see, I feed these people at lunch. I'm sore full at lunchtime. I go to DAR [Daughters of the American Revolution] and that's the only thing I really go to. The reason I got into that, because Ms. Frady, my neighbor, didn't drive and she wanted to go to DAR. My momma was in DAR and my sister is in DAR, and my momma had me join in Tennessee, and so I'd been a member in Tennessee. I said, "Okay, I'll go." I was at-large member where you could just sort of on the fringes and you don't have to do anything.

But my sister died two years ago and my mother's been gone 25 years. I thought, "Well, bygones are bygones. It's time for me to join." I've joined, so I'm a little bit involved now. The new regent is Sharon Connor, Coach Connor's wife. She used to be assistant principal at Owen, and she's trying to straighten us up and get us all in line. I don't think I can sit too much on the sidelines with her. (Laughter)

SJ: I could do that, I think, if I tracked it down.

BR: Well, you ought to. It's really interesting.

SJ: I know. I was definitely Daughters of the Confederacy.

BR: Well, guess what? I'm in all that too, and I'm all for that, but you know you can't... And I am really not precious. My family didn't have slaves or anything, but my great grandfather was in the Confederacy, and he was very loyal to the Confederacy all his life. From what I understand, my mama said when she was little that she was supposed to be in this church play and she said, "I want to say, 'I'm a Confederate up, I'm a Confederate down. I'm a Confederate all the way around and wrap myself in a Confederate flag." And

her Sunday school teacher said, "Pearl..." My mom's name is Pearl. She said, "Pearl, how about being an American flag, and say, "I'm an American up, I'm American down, I'm American all the way around." So that's what my mama was in the church play. She was an American, not a Confederate.

But I have all that in my background, and I know that a lot of things have not been even and have been discriminated against in the past and even today. But that is part of our history. It's like George Washington. Was he perfect? I'm sure he wasn't. But without him and our Founding Fathers, where would we be? And so, we have to look at the times that you live in. It's like when I grew up, this is a different analogy, we had an eight-party telephone, eight people were on our line and you'd listen to everybody. You talk about Facebook, you may not have seen their face, but you can--

SJ: You heard it.

BR: Yeah, an eight party and whatever. We got along fine. And so--

Some people didn't have a car, or some people were Black or some people were White. My daddy was a manager of a Black college farm when he and mama got married. We had Black people come to our house all the time. They ate with us. My brother said, "Becky, don't you remember Black water fountain and White...?" I do not remember any of that.

When I was in college, we became integrated. I don't remember any big to-do about it. It was just, you know. When my daddy died, there's probably as many Black people at his funeral as White people. So, I don't see any... Maybe people didn't have as good

educational opportunities or something then, but as far as... We didn't have a lot of money. They didn't have a lot of money. But if we had something, we gave them. If they had something, they gave us. We're all in this together.

RE: Do you see Fairview as fairly segregated? I don't know that much. I've not had that much exposure.

BR: Well, I don't think there's a lot of Black people living in Fairview. But one of our best friends we've ever had was a Black man, Rufus Adell, that lived down on Concord Road. He was just as true blue and wonderful as any person that you've ever seen. And so--

SJ: When they integrated Reynolds High School, there was an Adell who was the first Black kid that came the year I was a senior, I guess it was.

BR: Yeah. And Mr. Adell's grandson is a superintendent of schools at Hickory, isn't it?

SJ: I think it is. He graduated with Deborah, my sister. I can't think of his first name.

BR: Robbie, isn't he?

SJ: I can't remember.

BR: I think it's Robbie.

SJ: Robbie Adell.

BR: Yeah, Robbie Adell. But I tell you what, Mr. Adell, I'd put him up against anybody. He might not have had a lot of education but he's as smart and nice and wonderful as anybody you'd ever meet.

SJ: Yeah, I was trying to explain that to Jackson and Blake the other day. My husband's grandfather, he only went to about third or fourth grade, but he's the smartest man you ever met in your life because that man read everything.

BR: I know.

SJ: He was smart.

BR: I think that's the biggest thing we've got today. We think, "Oh, we got to do this." I've already mentioned it before. Certain way you're supposed to look, who cares what you look like? I heard a woman talk one time and she said, "What's my hat?" This is when people wore hats. "What's my hat look like? What do you think about my hair and all that?" And she said, "Most of you don't care what my hat looks like because you're more interested in knowing what your stuff looks like or how you feel," and so you don't need to get wrapped up too much in your stuff.

RE: That's so true. That's so true. You think anything else you can tell us about Fairview?

BR: Doesn't seem to me like I'm talking much about Fairview.

SJ: You never finished the differences of how it's changed besides the road being widened.

BR: Well, I don't have to go to town as much because there's a bank out here and all that, and so things like that... I don't know.

RE: Well, where have you gotten, through the years, your supplies for the farm? When you needed the supplies for the farm, where did you get those?

BR: Well, now most of the time they deliver them.

RE: Where did you get them initially when you all were first here?

BR: Well, they delivered then, or if we needed something we'd go pick it up, whatever. I mean, it was no big deal, whichever way. A lot of people are getting things now off of the computer. My husband and I are neither one are in that much or not at all really. I'm one of the few people that takes their bookkeeping. I do the bookkeeping stuff. I take the bookkeeping to the accountant on a ledger, so they always know when I'm coming. I stand out, outstanding in my field.

RE: Are your boys married?

BR: Nathan is. They don't have any children. Bart is not married, and I don't know, the Lord will have to send him somebody if he ever gets married because, bless his heart, he doesn't get out enough to stretch his wings much.

SJ: He's one good-looking guy.

BR: Well, he is so sweet and so nice, but I shouldn't even talk about it because I guess I preach it. The Lord gives you what you can handle, and he knows I couldn't handle much because he gave me two wonderful sons. I'll say that.

RE: Well, you think anything else we need to ask Becky that you know about? You did talk about Arden was high class long ago.

BR: Oh, yeah. Well, people get these ideas. It's not necessarily that. It's like the car I drive is old. It was Roy's mama's and it runs good. Roy said, "Becky, you might ought to

get you a new car." I said, "No, I don't need a new car. Number one, I'm not going to be here long probably. And number two, I'm getting too old to impress people. What you see is what you get. To tell you the truth, I know I'm talking in probably too simple or whatever, but I don't care if I'm talking to the President or if I'm talking to the janitor or somebody unemployed on the street. I hope that I treat everybody the same regardless.

RE: You find that's true of the people you encounter in Fairview, that they're pretty accepting of the--

BR: I think so.

RE: Yeah. They're just kind of people who are accepting.

BR: You can be snooty if you want to be, but that's your problem. That's not mine.

SJ: She's the type who takes care of, like she said, Ms. Frady. My mother-in-law was at the same rest home as her for a while.

BR: Oh, she was so--

SJ: So was my mama, and she was always there seeing Ms. Frady.

BR: Well, she didn't have any children, and she had been with us through thick and thin. I always said I never had to do it, but she always said that if we ever had a hard time, we could move in her basement. If you ever went to her basement, saw how crowded it was, you knew we couldn't get in. But she was just a rock for us, and so I'm sorry she's gone. But I know she's 91, and I know she's sick and things change regardless.

SJ: When my father-in-law had his heart attack, we were sitting in the waiting room. Here came Ms. Frady with a pile of snacks for us to eat.

BR: Well, see that's the way they did for everybody. Mr. Frady had [inaudible 00:54:19] the night he had his first stroke that they didn't keep him in the hospital. They had taken Velma McBrayer to Belk's to get her dress to wear to her granddaughter's wedding. They were just doing things for people all the time.

SJ: They were sweet.

BR: Yeah.

RE: We talked about the farm. Before we wrap up here, I want to ask this. You're cooking for these farm hands and these helpers and your family. Do you ever get help with the housework?

BR: Well, when I was spending three or four nights a week with my mother-in-law and two or three nights a week with my friend in Tennessee when she was really sick and was cooking, Roy got me this woman to come in and help me a little. But to tell you the truth, time I talked to her what to do, I could have done it myself. I mean, I'm not saying I didn't appreciate somebody coming, don't get me wrong. I hope if I ever get to the point that I can't do things that I will accept help graciously and not try to be some kind of little puffed up independent old woman.

RE: Are you going to be buried in the cemetery there at Pleasant Grove?

BR: Well, I'm hoping so. I don't know. We've not got our lots yet. My husband said once he wanted us to go to Madison County where his family was originally from, and they

got a cemetery out there. I shouldn't even talk about this because we don't know what we're going do. But anyway... And then the other day he said he didn't much want us to go out there. And I thought, well, it'd sort be neat to go out there because it's that family cemetery and stuff, and a lot of them are already gone and probably nobody else is going to be married out there much. But I don't know what we're going to do. I'd like to go to Pleasant Grove, but I'm not sure where we'll end up. And you know what? The Lord might just come and Rapture us away and it won't matter. (Laughter)

RE: Won't matter whether you got a plot of ground or not, will it? All right. I just had to ask that because I know that Pleasant Grove has a cemetery.

BR: And it's nice, too, but I don't want to be down in a hole.

SJ: Well, what is a cemetery?

BR: I know, but you know where the water.

SJ: You mean down in the dip in the ground.

BR: Yeah, I want to be up on a little thing where the water will roll down. I don't want it to puddle around me. That's sort of stupid, isn't it?

SJ: No.

RE: It's like people want to be on top of the mountain or under a tree, who cares. Who knows?

BR: Well, I wouldn't want to do that. A man that worked for us, and then he got disabled and he died last fall. He was cremated and he wanted his ashes put around a tree at his

house on our property, which was okay with us, put up a little sign. But I don't like that idea myself. But anyway, everybody's got their way of doing things. See, that's one way that things have changed today. That's one thing Ms. Frady told me one time. She said, "It's very important for you to have a burial spot, not to be scattered in the stream or on a mountain or something because if somebody ever wants to research or find out where you are, you'll have a place where they can say, this is where they're buried. And it's not... If you're dumped in the Pacific Ocean, there's no... I mean that's true.

SJ: That's true.

BR: Yeah. Ms. Frady told me that, and I went to my neighbor actually. I guess you're still recording. I don't want this to be his family. Of course, there's none of them here now, but my neighbor, I know they put him in a box. I know they put him in a box, and every time and they put him in this little stream by their house and I went to the funeral at his house and every time it rained, I'd think, I don't know, he's stuck in some bushes some place. It bothered me immensely. I hate to say that, but it did.

SJ: I don't know about it. I don't know if I'd want to be cremated.

BR: Well, I think now I don't mind because I went to Judy Smith's mother-in-law's funeral, and her husband was buried in a regular casket and she was cremated and they buried her in a box on that same grave block where her husband was. I thought, "Oh boy, that's too bad. I wouldn't mind that. Well, what if I got burned? I'm cremated anyway."

SJ: Or if a shark ate you here.

RE: Well, that would be worse than burned.

BR: I don't believe I'll be eaten by a shark. I almost got attacked by a bull when I was little. If it hadn't been for this Black boy helping my daddy, I would've probably had it. He came, I could still remember him. That bull had its head down charging toward me, and he came and picked me up and got me away from the bull.

RE: Wow.

BR: I might not even be here telling you this story.

RE: All right, Miss Becky. Thank you so much for talking with us. We're going to turn this off now.

BR: Yeah.

RE: There's stop.

END OF INTERVIEW.

Original home of George W. and Elmira Toms Lynch called "The Oaks".
Photo taken Fall 1908, house burned about a yr. later

Man in photo is Dr. Lynch son of George & Elmira Lynch

Lynch home as it was rebuilt after original burned.

Home of my Grandmother, Mrs. Elmyra Minerva Toms Lynch Fairfield, N.C. (from desk) M.L.R.

BRAD —
WESTERN CAROLINA
INTERESTING —

Becoming Aunt Jane

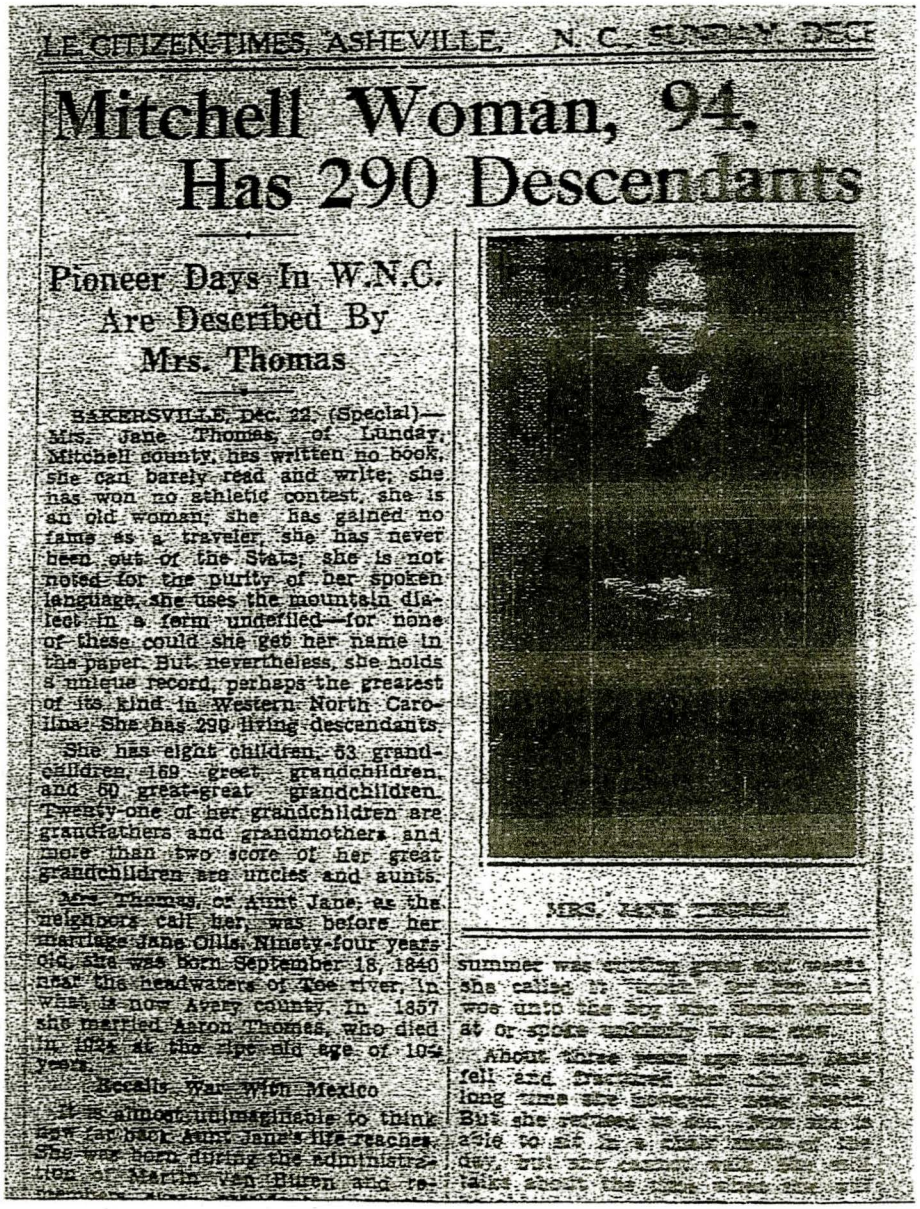
The passage of time carries the same set of slow-cooking surprises for all of us.

WHENEVER I NEED a soul-cleansing laugh, I reread a newspaper article published in the *Asheville Citizen-Times* on December 22, 1934: "Mitchell Woman, 94, Has 290 Descendants." That's 290 living descendants: eight children, 53 grandchildren, 169 great-grandchildren and 60 great-great grandchildren. Twenty one of her grandchildren were grandmothers and grandfathers themselves by the time the article appeared.

The name of the woman with the prodigious number of descendants is Jane Ollis Thomas. In 1857, at age 17, she married a man 20 years her senior. Despite their age difference, "Aunt Jane" Thomas had been a widow for only 10 years in 1934. Her husband Aaron Thomas lived to the age of 104.

"It is almost unimaginable to think how far back Aunt Jane's life reaches," the interviewer notes. Martin Van Buren was president when she was born; she remembered every president back to Polk. She recalled the Gold Rush – and had vivid memories of the Civil War. When Aaron went off to fight, he left her with three small children to feed and keep clothed – on rented land. There were nights when, having gotten her babies to sleep, she stole out of the cabin to hoe corn by moonlight.

Aaron sent his pay home but she never spent any of it. She hid it away for safekeeping. Perhaps she buried it to keep it out of the hands of marauders who pillaged the North Carolina mountains during the war. That money was the ticket to her dream: that once Aaron came home (if he did), they could buy their own place. Can you imagine the day he did? The way her joy must have mingled with despair when he told her that that money she'd husbanded through the war years – Confederate money – wasn't worth a thing. She'd been 21 years old when he left, was 25 on his return. He was 45, worn out from war. They couldn't have had any idea that he had another 59 years coming to him. They took up their lives; they made more babies. Eventually they were



...E CITIZEN-TIMES, ASHEVILLE, N. C. SUNDAY DEC...

Mitchell Woman, 94, Has 290 Descendants

Pioneer Days In W.N.C. Are Described By Mrs. Thomas

BAKERSVILLE, Dec. 22. (Special)—Mrs. Jane Thomas, of Lunday, Mitchell county, has written no book, she can barely read and write, she has won no athletic contest, she is an old woman; she has gained no fame as a traveler, she has never been out of the State, she is not noted for the purity of her spoken language, she uses the mountain dialect in a form undefiled—for none of these could she get her name in the paper. But, nevertheless, she holds a unique record, perhaps the greatest of its kind in Western North Carolina. She has 290 living descendants.

She has eight children, 53 grandchildren, 169 great grandchildren, and 60 great-great grandchildren. Twenty-one of her grandchildren are grandfathers and grandmothers and more than two score of her great grandchildren are uncles and aunts.

Mrs. Thomas, or Aunt Jane, as the neighbors call her, was before her marriage Jane Ollis. Ninety-four years ago, she was born September 18, 1840 near the headwaters of Toe river, in what is now Avery county. In 1857 she married Aaron Thomas, who died in 1932, at the ripe old age of 104 years.

Recalls War With Mexico

It is almost unimaginable to think how far back Aunt Jane's life reaches. She was born during the administration of Martin Van Buren and re-

MRS. [illegible]

summer was [illegible] she called it [illegible] woe unto the boy who [illegible] at or spoke [illegible]

About three years ago [illegible] fell and fractured [illegible] long time she [illegible] But she refused to [illegible] able to sit in a chair [illegible] day, but she [illegible] talk about the [illegible]

A 1934 profile of "Aunt Jane" Thomas is among columnist Elizabeth Hunter's most treasured possessions, for what it reveals about Aunt Jane – and herself.

The way her joy must have mingled with despair when he told her that that money she'd husbanded through the war years – Confederate money – wasn't worth a thing.

able to buy their own place, but it took many more pinched, hardscrabble years.

The photograph accompanying the story shows an unsmiling woman, sitting ramrod straight, wearing a dark dress with a white collar and a brooch. You can tell she put on her best clothes to have her picture made. Her hands are folded in her lap. Her hair, still with some color to it, is pulled back tightly behind protuberant ears. Her mouth is a firm, uncompromising line. This is a photograph of a woman who, having shared the outlines of her life with a young whippersnapper of a writer, has plenty more to say.

"Aunt Jane despises to hear farm boys and girls of today talk about having to work so much when they ought to be thankful they have so much time for rest and relaxation," the interviewer writes. Despises is a pretty strong word, but Aunt Jane can cite chapter and verse. For example, "the modern girl thinks about a new dress one day, buys the cloth the next day, and makes it the third day." The blink of an eye compared to Aunt Jane's own experience. In her girlhood, it took six to 12 months of planning to come up with a new dress. For a wool dress, "the sheep had to be sheared, the wool picked and carded into rolls, the rolls spun into thread, and the thread woven into cloth before she was even where the modern girl begins." A linen dress took even longer. Flax had to be planted and grown and the fibers broken before carding and spinning could begin. When would the women of Jane's youth have had time to do such work? Only at night, because "during the day they had to take their places in the field by the men."

If the family needed shoes, hides had to be tanned. If you wanted to wash your face, you had to make lye soap from ashes. Modern boys and girls getting out of bed before daybreak merely switch on an electric light or light a lamp.

Not in Aunt Jane's day. Back then, "before she could have a light, tallow had to be made, candles run, and lighters made out

This is a photograph of a woman who, having shared the outlines of her life with a young whippersnapper of a writer, has plenty more to say.

of paper or splinters with which to light them from the fireplace. If the fire had gone out at morning, someone would have to hike to a neighbor's two or three miles away, maybe through the snow, to borrow a chunk of fire." No such thing as a wood cook stove for Aunt Jane; cooking was done in the fireplace. Cornbread was made without soda or salt. To have breakfast ready for the men before they went out to work or to hunt, women rose hours before the sun lightened the eastern sky.

You can tell the interviewer would like the lecturing to stop. He finally steers Aunt Jane toward a subject for which she feels affection: her chickens, to each of whom she gave a name, and her cow. She didn't begrudge the time it took her to cut grass and weeds to keep it sleek and fat, she says. Lately, though, those pleasures have been denied her. At age 91, she fell and fractured her hip. She'd hovered near death for awhile but she "refused to die." She still can't walk, though she's now able to sit in her chair most of the day. If sheer will has anything to do with it, and she hopes it does, she'll be out there again feeding her cow and chickens.

The interviewer asks the inevitable final question: To what do you owe your long life? She does not say "the Lord." She does not say "hard work." She says she does not know. Aunt Jane is full of strong opinions – on everything but this one thing. Here she is at a loss.

I owe possession of this article to a neighbor, Carolyn Thomas Livingston. She brought it to Bandana Club, the weekly get-togethers we hold in my neighbor Helen McKinney's living room from the beginning of January until the end of March. In the eight-nine years that have elapsed since we started meeting, we've lost nearly all the "modern boys and girls" Aunt Jane so despised for their layabout ways. Before they died, or had to stop coming because they could no longer drive at night, those 1930s youngsters, who came of age in the Great Depression, told us about life back then: about outdoor washdays, filling big iron pots with water from the creek, heating it over a fire, beating clothes clean, heating more water to rinse them out. They all had lots of daily chores. Every one of them knew how to milk a cow. They hoed corn alongside their parents and siblings from daylight to dark; they took once-a-week baths in a tub in front of the stove, in the same water the rest of the family used. Layabouts?

That's why I laugh so, every time I reread this article. I see how imprisoned I am in my own growing-up world view, formulated in that mid-20th-century past when families, if they had a TV, had only one – and it black and white. Only one telephone – and it a party line. But I also feel Aunt Jane's pain. Back in the 1980s, when I got my first Macintosh computer, I subscribed to *MacWorld Magazine*. I read it and re-subscribed. I thought I was keeping up. Today, I'm Aunt Jane. I've never been on Facebook, sent a text message or a Tweet. The clouds I recognize are those that promise rain. Our modern boys and girls spend scandalous amounts of time shopping, texting, playing video games and following sports. But I have some pity for them; I know they are in for a shock. Because the day is coming, sooner than they can possibly imagine, when they'll wake to discover that they've become Aunt Janes themselves.

Morristown, Tennessee to Bryson City, North Carolina

1916-1966

In the fall of 1916 many of the Fire Departments were replacing the horse with motor driven equipment. My father, who was a livestock dealer, purchased many of these horses. Mostly they were Persherons weighing about 1500 to 1700 pounds-beautifully kept and trained.

These horses were sold to the William M. Ritter Lumber Company and delivered to one of their large band mills in North Carolina. I am unable to give the exact location but it was over the Tennessee-North Carolina line beyond Clingman's Dome and New Found Gap and about sixteen miles from Bryson City. (location may be Sunburst according to later information)

My brother Clarence, who was fourteen years of age and in the eighth grade, Robert Topping and I took nine of these horses across the mountains to this lumber mill. Bob and I were Seniors in Morristown High School. We each rode a horse and led two others. We left home early in the morning and had lunch at the famous Shepherd Inn in Dandridge eighteen miles away. Here we ferried across the French Broad River and on to Sevierville some eighteen miles further for the first night. The horses were placed in the local livery stable and we stayed at a small hotel.

The second day we were up early and on our way. The Smokies lay ahead, stacked one upon another. We went up the Pigeon River and I recall passing a school at recess time and when the large bell rang "for books" those fire horses became very excited and hard to manage.

We arrived at Gatlinburg which had one small unpainted country store owned by Mr. Huff. We had our lunch at the store-some cheese and crackers, along with sardines and perhaps a few sticks of candy. Mr. Huff suggested that we plan to spend the night at the last farmhouse at the foot of the mountain and assured us that they would welcome us for the night.

It was almost sundown when we arrived at the farm. The house was made of logs with one large room and a lean-to kitchen. A steep stair went to the attic which had two beds. Our horses could not get into the log barn which was made for small mules. They were staked in the orchard for the night.

We were well received and had good food for supper. After supper we sat around a big fire of maple or sugar tree logs. The room was about twenty feet square and the fire was so hot that I sat in a corner with my hands over my face to protect myself from the heat. The wife would come in with a tin bucket of water and dash it on the fire. It would simmer for a few minutes and then off again.

We still had fifteen miles to go across the roughest of the Smokies. Our route was a Government blazed trail made some years back. In the meantime many trees had fallen across the trail, making it difficult to travel with the horses. At lunch we tied the horses to trees and climbed upon a fire outlook that had been built above the tree tops. The view from here was one of the most beautiful to be seen in America. The fifteen miles across the mountains took a full day and we arrived at the mill just before dark. We spent the night in the quarters of the loggers and next morning inspected the mill, went by the office to get a check for the horses and then walked

sixteen miles to Bryson City to catch a train for Asheville and Morristown. It was the day after the Presidential Election and Woodrow Wilson defeated Charles Evans Hughes. At one stop a man got on the train with the largest apple I have ever seen. It was about six inches in diameter and he told us that he was sending it to President Wilson.

I have just returned from making this same trip by car fifty years later. The eighty five miles from Morristown to Bryson City was made in two hours over beautiful highways, across new bridges, by new lakes and through the Great Smoky Mountain National Park. Gatlinburg is no longer an unpainted country store. There are over one hundred motels in and near Gatlinburg. The Gatlinburg Inn was built by Mr. Huff and is headquarters for many national and international conventions.

The blazed trail has given way to wonderful highway across the Mountains at Newfound Gap. It is an engineering accomplishment as it goes through tunnels, over ravines and along the mountain side. Millions of people visit this region each year and it is one of the scenic sights in this country.

The marvel is not that we made the trip in two hours that took three days fifty years ago. The fact is that in 1916 most of our travel was still by horse and we could not travel in a day any further than man was able to travel two thoudand years ago.

A. Walton Litz
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